

Ticket to Work/Work Incentives Improvement Act
Medicaid Infrastructure Grant
Advisory Group

Meeting Minutes
May 22, 2003

The Ticket to Work/Work Incentives Improvement Act Medicaid Infrastructure Grant Advisory Group Meeting was called to order by Cochair William Heavilin, at 10:00 a.m., on Thursday, May 22, 2003, at the Division of Health Care Financing & Policy, 1100 East William Street, 2nd Floor Conference Room, Carson City, Nevada.

Members in Attendance:

Nina Davenport, National Multiple Sclerosis Society/Las Vegas Office
Tracy DuPree, Nevada State Welfare Division
Lisa Erquiaga, Northern Nevada Center for Independent Living/Fallon Office
Robert "Red" Foster, General Public
Terry Hardy, General Public
William Heavilin, Nevada Disability Advocacy & Law Center
Robin Renshaw, Nevada Parents Encouraging Parents
Robert Simola, Ormsby ARC
Alyce Thomas, Southern Nevada Adult Mental Health Services
Kimberli Varé, The Skill Builders of Nevada

Members Not in Attendance:

Paul Gowins, Northern Nevada Center for Independent Living

Staff:

Connie Anderson, Chief of Medicaid Services
Mary Wherry, Deputy Administrator, Division of Health Care Financing and Policy
Mary Jackson, Southern Nevada Program Specialist
Linda James, Rural Program Specialist
Priscilla Hartsfield, Contract Administrative Assistant

Others Present:

Bonnie Dixon, Nevada Disability Advocacy & Law Center
Loretta Wilson

I. Roll Call

Linda James, Rural Program Specialist, introduced Priscilla Hartsfield who called the meeting roll. It was determined that a quorum was present.

II. April Meeting Minutes Approval

The April meeting minutes were reviewed and no additions or corrections were noted. Alyce Thomas made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Tracy DuPree, seconded the motion. The minutes as written for the April 2003 meeting were approved.

III. Staff Projects Status Update

a. Chief's Report

Connie Anderson, Chief of Medicaid Services, began by introducing herself to the group. She has been with Medicaid for just over a year and has worked in California, Alaska and now Nevada. Her background is primarily as a disability advocate. She was a director of an independent living center in Alaska for eight years and before that she was an administrative officer in California. She has a large administrative background and a great deal of expertise with federal and state grants.

Besides the Ticket-to-Work Program she has the responsibility for Nevada Check-up, which is the state children's health insurance program. She is responsible for the Covering Kids and Families grant, and for all of the Medicaid district offices. She has about 100 staff and a large scope of responsibilities, but is grateful to be part of the Ticket-to-Work Program as well.

She reminded the group that Jean Laird is a temporary contract employee who has taken on the responsibility for the grant. After John Alexander left, the division needed to ensure the grant activities continued, reports were completed accurately and on time, and all the things that go on behind the scenes, so to speak, were effectively handled. We are grateful to have her. She is doing a great job.

Ms. Anderson said it is fortunate the Medicaid Buy-in-Program has so far been approved, with a start date of July 1, 2004, pending final action by the legislature.

She said the advisory group deserves a pat on the back and John Alexander did a wonderful job in moving the program along. Fortunately we had Jean, who was able to answer the questions from the Legislature and keep the process moving. The division got extensive questions from the Legislature and was able to keep that going smoothly. The staff deserves a lot of credit for that.

She announced that she had hired someone to replace John Alexander. Her name is Lori Wilson and she has been with the Welfare Division since about 1991. Ms. Wilson knows about the HIWA program and is an eligibility expert in the Welfare Division. She is scheduled to start on June 9, 2003.

She talked about the future direction of the grant, which expires in December 2004, and the advisory group. She pointed out the need to strengthen the relationship among the advisory group, the staff, and the administration of the division.

Ms Anderson said it is time, now that we are going to implement a buy-in program, to educate people about what the buy-in program will mean in the lives of people with disabilities. One of the ways to do this is in the monthly newsletter. She noted the program had received a critical letter regarding the newsletter and it caused her to reflect on the purpose and validity of the newsletter. Education is an ongoing thing. We educate, we educate, and we educate some more. This will be the focus in the next year and a half.

She said we need to develop, with the help of the advisory group, a program policy manual. It is time to get things ironed out and in writing for everybody to "buy into" the policies.

She informed the group the division had started developing a computer system for HIWA and will now put it on the fast track, because it is a system development that will interface with the Welfare Division software system and include a premium payment system.

She pointed out the need to develop training: Welfare Division staff training, Medicaid staff training, consumer training and employer training. Other stake holders, too, need training: centers for independent living, Vocational Rehabilitation Division, all of those folks. She said we want to bring those people in because we want our program to be successful.

Another focus will be outreach, such as the 1619 (a) & (b) consumer training. We also want to support the employer conference in October 2003. The advisory group talked about that at the last meeting, where the Governor's Committee for Employment of People with Disabilities (CCEPD) has asked for a financial contribution from the Ticket-to-Work grant. Ms. Laird has developed a spending plan for the grant and has recommended that we support the conference. Ms. Anderson said she took that forward to administration and also recommends that we support the conference. The advisory group had asked for \$14,000 to support it.

Alyce Thomas expressed concerns that, if the advisory group voted to fund the conference, it would like to have a voice and be involved in the conference. Robert Simola responded by telling the group they would probably do the same things they did last year. He said they need our support and would like for us to be there to pass out information. Kitty Barth, Administrator, GCEPD, also talked about asking several advisory group members to speak at the conference this year.

Ms. Anderson suggested the advisory group take up its concern with Kitty Barth to ensure that, if we sponsor the speakers, our involvement not be limited only to the sponsorship. She encouraged the group to handout materials, so people will know more about HIWA, Ticket-to-Work, and the Medicaid Buy-in Program.

Ms. Anderson said if the group has any questions, concerns, or comments, the easiest way to contact her is through e-mail. Her address is canderson@dhcfp.state.nv.us.

Bill Heavilin asked whether there was a chance the Legislature would revisit the ticket HIWA program in the budget before the end of the session. There was discussion that it was possible and they decided to continue efforts by communicating with e-mail, letters, phone calls, and for those who can, by coming to Carson City to attend the session.

b. Policy Development

Mary Jackson, Southern Nevada Program Specialist, indicated the staff had developed a draft policy outline. The outline is the skeleton structure of the Medicaid Policy Manual and the Medicaid state plan. The policy will cover:

- 1) Eligibility Criteria
- 2) Coverage and Limitations
- 3) Application Process
- 4) Income Requirements
- 5) Resource Requirements
- 6) Treatment of Other Income
- 7) Disability Determination Process

- 8) Service Providers
- 9) Premium Requirements
- 10) Program Eligibility Termination

Ms. Jackson pointed out that at one of the community meetings, consumers expressed a lot of concern about the application process. She said there will be issues about how to verify income and issues regarding work-related disregards. There are program criteria dependent on Legislative approval and findings, such as resource limits (the advisory group recommended \$15,000) and whether family income will be considered. It needs to be decided how to make a disability determination for an applicant who is not receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) at the time of application. The advisory group had previously recommended a medical review team be developed, either in-house or contracted.

Regarding service providers, Ms. Jackson said the policy needs to distinguish between regular Medicaid and waiver programs.

Mary Wherry asked whether the results of division administration review of program policy were shared with the advisory group and whether the policy being developed is in line with the division-approved policy. Mary Jackson answered “yes” to both questions.

c. Section 1619 Outreach

Mary Jackson reported she was preparing an administrative proposal of the plan for the 1619 consumer training, to be approved by the division.

d. “Ticket Team” Consumer Handbook Update

Linda James distributed seven copies of the second draft of the ticket team consumer handbook. Mary Jackson has been working on the layout and format of the handbook along with Anita Puentes who is with the Nevada Disability Law and Advocacy Center, and who did the drafting of most of the handbook. Ms. Jackson said there are approximately 46,000 ticket recipients and if we send the proposed handbook to each of them, the cost to the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) would be estimated at \$82,800 for the printing alone. She said this amount does not include mailing cost. The members indicated further work should be done to bring the cost down.

Robert Simola suggested the handbooks be sent to the employment networks to be given to ticket recipients who contact them. The group indicated this would be a more effective distribution plan than just mailing them. Ms. Jackson said she would report the costs and the recommendations from the advisory group, regarding distribution at the next ticket team meeting.

William Heavilin made the suggestion the group needed time to review the handbook and said he would like to have this on the agenda as an action item for next month’s meeting. He made the point that the Nevada ticket team was mentioned in the handbook, but the members should also be identified.

e. “Partners for Profits” Conference Update

As previously discussed, Connie Anderson will be recommending to the administration that funds from the MIG grant be used to support the “Partners for Profits” employers’ conference. Ms. James reported that she had gone with Kitty Barth to look at facilities for the conference in Reno. Locations being considered are the new Convention Center, Silver Legacy, Peppermill, and John Ascuaga’s Nugget. Ms. Barth is requesting bids. The conference is tentatively to be held on October 25, 2003 and October 27, 2003, a Tuesday and Thursday, allowing Wednesday for speakers and staff to travel.

f. Employment Network Summit Update

The advisory group had voted at the previous meeting to send Robert Simola to the Employment Network Summit in Washington, D.C. Due to an illness within his agency he was unable to attend. The suggestion was made to name an alternate for future events. Nina Davenport reported that parts of the conference were available on conference call.

IV. Legislative Update on HIWA

Mary Wherry, Deputy Administrator, Division of Health Care Financing and Policy, informed the members there would be a Republican Caucus this afternoon regarding tax revenues. She indicated they were interested in Welfare Division and Medicaid spending and may be questioning why spending is increasing. She said that, even though the budgets have been approved by the Senate, it is not safe to assume we have the green light on any spending, including HIWA. She said the division is still optimistic, however. In fact, staff is currently in the process of developing policy and the advisory group will have opportunity to review the policy.

Robin Renshaw asked when the division would know for certain and Ms. Wherry answered it would be when the Legislature is no longer in session and we know it hasn’t been cut. She added that one fairly certain change is the program will start July 01, 2004, rather than October 1, 2003.

Ms. Wherry indicated to the advisory group that continued contacts with legislators would be recommended, so they don’t lose sight of its importance if budget cuts become necessary.

V. New Business

a. Workplace Personal Assistance brochure

Linda James reported that the electronic copy of the Workplace Personal Assistance brochure published by American Public Human Services Association (APHSA), our technical advisory group for the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant, has been requested and will be available soon. She suggested the advisory group might come up with some ideas or suggestions of how they might like to see this brochure used.

There was discussion on how parts of the brochure might be incorporated into our handbook. Robin Renshaw pointed out a disabled person might look at this information along with the

handbook and maybe decide they can work because of all the assistive technologies available.

Robert “Red” Foster made the comment that he knew a lot of people who, if they didn’t know they were getting help on the job, wouldn’t bother to go look. If they thought there was a possibility they could get help, more of them would go out and look for jobs.

Tracy Dupree, made a motion to table this item until the next meeting to give Mary Jackson time to determine whether some of the information could be incorporated into the Ticket-to-Work Handbook. Alyce Thomson seconded the motion. **The motion passed unanimously.**

b. Future direction of Advisory Group

Mr. Heavilin noted that Connie Anderson had previously discussed the direction of the Advisory Group in the Chief’s Report and she expressed the need for greater communication with the administration and staff of the division. He said she also pointed out how the advisory group’s help was needed in developing the program manual and in education and outreach to employers and people with disabilities. Mr. Heavilin stated that this was the critical stage in terms of how the policies are drafted, to ensure the program is what the advisory group hoped for and that people with disabilities can go back to work and have access to health care.

Kimberli Varé, made a motion to table the future direction of the advisory group until the next meeting. Tracy Dupree seconded the motion. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Ms. Anderson told the group that funding is not an issue if they choose to continue to meet monthly. The issue is to use the advisory group’s time well, involving people and addressing issues appropriately.

William Heavilin said something to think about was that the cochair positions are ending in June and the new cochairs would take post in July.

Connie Anderson reminded the group that the vacancies on the advisory group should also be discussed at the next meeting. She said there was someone in Carson City who is very interested in becoming a member of the group. She pointed out that, according to the by-laws, the group should be representative of all of Nevada, but geographical positions are not designated. The two vacancies in Las Vegas are the ones to be filled. However, according to the by-laws, the person does not have to be from Las Vegas to fill the position. She encouraged the group to prioritize their recommendations for appointments to the advisory group. The group was asked to submit name, address, phone number and a brief history for each candidate.

William Heavilin expressed his opinion that 70 percent of the population lives in Clark County and encouraged proportionate representation for the southern part of Nevada. Alyce Thomas pointed out that there is no family representation. She explained that she was referring to children that have disabilities from the ages of 16 to 24 that are transitioning from child to adult.

VI. Group Report

a. Robin Renshaw – Transition Forum

Robin Renshaw shared information about a focus group meeting on Friday, May 23, 2003. He asked that, if members knew anybody that works with Vocational Rehabilitation, either parents or students, to let them know about this focus group meeting. The focus group is addressing the reauthorization of I.D.E.A. (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997). The reauthorization reduces the power that parents have of children with disabilities. Mr. Renshaw said they want to take away parents' rights and we need all the people that can to contact their senators to say "no" to this. He passed out a paper to be discussed at the focus group meeting. He said the I.D.E.A. reauthorization is in the Senate and they are going to vote on it.

VII. Public Comment Period

Linda James pointed out two articles that had been published in the publication of Nevadan Access. The articles were written by Robin Renshaw and herself. She also asked the members to sign a letter to John Alexander, the former Project Manager. She read a letter responding to Gary Olsen, which staff had drafted as requested, regarding there not being a facilitator for him at a recent reception the advisory group had also attended. Connie Anderson advised the group to always make sure that activities that we participate in are accessible to everyone. The letter thanked him for attending the reception. It also let him know there were openings for the advisory group and that if his organization had individuals that may be interested, to please notify the advisory group. Ms. Anderson cautioned the group to be careful and to have a policy to clearly state how a person can request reasonable accommodations. Federal regulations require us to err on the side of caution.

Linda James reminded the members that next month's advisory group meeting is June 19, 2003, in a small meeting room in the Best Western Motel in Fernley.

Ms. Anderson suggested the announcement of the meeting should be put in the local newspaper (The Fernley Leader), that we might get more public comments that way.

VIII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:40 p.m.